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ABSTRACT

School counselors perform a variety of tasks and are expected to assume a variety of roles. In an effort to determine school counselor and administrator perceptions of counselor responsibilities, 404 counselors and 315 administrators in Iowa completed a questionnaire by ranking their perceptions of actual and ideal counselor roles in each of 13 responsibilities areas. The results of the questionnaire revealed that elementary counselors seemed to stress direct work with students, teachers, and parents to enhance the optimal learning in the classroom. Secondary school counselors seemed to stress direct contact with students, often on a one-to-one basis, to facilitate structured interventions, educational advisement, scheduling and placement, career guidance, and orientation and registration. Secondary counselors reported giving less attention to working with teachers or parents in reaching counseling goals. Elementary counselors appeared to have a closer relationship between perceived actual roles and ideal roles with junior/senior high counselors having the biggest gap between these roles. While counselors tended to have considerable distance between their perceived actual role and their ideal role, administrators tended to have a very similar priority ranking between what they saw counselors actually doing and what they considered the ideal counselor role to be. If counselors are going to move closer to their perceived ideal role, they must communicate this role to the administrator. (The questionnaire and a rank ordering of responsibilities is included.) (NB)

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Counselor/Administrator Perceptions of Counselor Responsibilities

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This research has been jointly sponsored by the Guidance Section of the Iowa Department of Public Instruction and the Counselor Education staff at the University of Northern Iowa.

All counselors in Iowa were provided with a copy of the research questionnaire and asked to rank their perceived and ideal role in each of the 13 responsibilities area. (See questionnaire attached.) A copy was also sent to administrators identified in those schools where a counselor was a member of staff. Approximately 50% of the counselors completed the questionnaire. The sample by grade level included:

	Counselors	Administrators	Totals
Elementary	37	44	81
Middle School	31	27	58
Junior High	65	47	112
Senior High	171	108	279
Junior and Senior High	100	89	189
	404	315	719

Perception of Counselor's Responsibilities

Counselor perceptions of their actual and ideal role are commonly shared on the top 5 priority responsibilities, although there is a considerable difference between second level priorities (ranks numbered 6-10), orientation (5th) and organizational activities (8th) are perceived responsibilities which rank higher in actual role than the perceived ideal role. Parent educator and consultation, coordination of referrals, professional development and accountability and classroom developmental guidance are roles in which counselors would like to increase their involvement.

In examining counselors perceptions of their actual role by grade level, great variations are noted. Only planned sequential interactions are considered top priorities at all levels although junior/senior high and senior high counselors perceive this as a third or second priority. All other levels view this as the number one priority. Classroom Development Guidance which ranked second for elementary and middle school counselors was ranked 11th by senior high counselors. In similar manner elementary and middle school counselors perceive inservice with teachers, facilitating student adjustment for learning, parent education and consultation and coordination of referrals to be higher priorities than do the senior high or junior/senior high counselors.

On the other hand, senior high and junior/senior high counselors place more focus on educational advisement, scheduling and placement, career guidance and the coordination of student records and information than do the elementary and middle school counselors. A special attention on standardized testing (5th) at the junior high/senior high level does not seem to be shared at other levels with senior high counselors ranking this area as 12th of a possible 13 ranks.

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Counselor perceptions of their ideal role vary on the basis of their grade level. Elementary school counselors perceived and ideal roles are almost identical and suggest the elementary school counselor has been able to define and communicate their role to the educational population. Middle school counselors often are very similar to elementary counselors in role identity, however, seem to place a higher priority on educational advisement, scheduling and placement. Junior high counselors feel they should be more active in consultation activities with teachers, referral activities, parent education and consultation, and classroom developmental guidance. In a similar vein they would like to be less involved in orientation and registration, organizational activities, standardized testing, and educational advising, scheduling and placement.

Senior high counselors would like to be more involved in planned sequential interventions, career guidance, inservice education with teachers facilitating student adjustment for learning, parent education and consultation and classroom developmental guidance. They would prefer less involvement in educational advisement, scheduling and placement, orientation and registration, organizational activities, and student records and information.

Junior/senior high counselors would like to be more involved in planned sequential interventions, facilitating student adjustment for learning, and parent educational and consultation. They would prefer less involvement in organizational activities, standardized testing coordination of student records and information and educational advisement, scheduling and placement.

There does not appear to be any clear, defined agreement of counselor roles for junior high, junior/senior high or senior high counselors. Major focus appears to be in the area of educational advisement, scheduling and placement, career guidance and planned scheduled interventions, although considerable difference between perceived role and ideal role suggest considerable variation among these and other identified counselor roles.

Administrators' Perception of Counselor Responsibilities

Administrators' perception of counselors perceived and ideal role are very similar and consistent at all levels although certain roles shift focus from level to level.

Elementary level administrators feel planned interventions and classroom developmental guidance are prime roles for counselors. Middle school administrators also place a high priority on facilitating student adjustment for learning and a lower value on classroom developmental guidance. Junior high administrators have the same prime roles as elementary administrators, however recognize educational advising, scheduling and placement, as a high priority (3rd). Senior high administrators see educational advising, scheduling and placement, planned sequential interventions and career guidance as major roles. Junior-senior high administrators concur with senior high counselors and stress roles in educational advising, scheduling and placement, career guidance, planned sequential interventions and coordinated standardized testing.

There appears to be considerable variation for several responsibilities based on the administrators' perception of the counselor. Classroom developmental guidance ranked as the top perceived priority at the elementary level is ranked 8th by junior and senior high administrators. In similar manner, consultation of inservice with teachers is considered a high priority (3rd) for elementary and middle school administrators and considered a low priority for junior/senior (10th) and high school (9th) administrators. On the other hand, junior/senior high administrators place high priority on educational

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advising, scheduling and placement (1st), career guidance (2nd) and standardized testing (4th), while elementary school administrators rank these same roles as 12th, 7.5 and 10th.

Summary

Administrators tend to have a very similar priority ranking between what they see counselors actually doing and what they consider the ideal counselor role to be.

Counselors on the other hand tend to have considerable distance between their perceived role and their ideal perceived role. If counselors are going to move closer to their perceived ideal role they must communicate to the administrator these perceived differences.

Elementary counselors seem to have a closer relationship between perceived and ideal roles with junior/senior high counselors having the biggest gap between these roles.

Elementary counselors seem to stress direct work with students, teachers and parents to enhance the optimal learning in the classroom. Developmental classroom guidance activities are often used to facilitate these priorities.

Secondary school counselors on the other hand seem to stress direct contact with students, often on a personal one-to-one basis to facilitate structured interventions, educational advisement, scheduling and placement, career guidance and orientation and registration. Less attention is given to working with teachers or parents in reaching counseling goals.

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RANK ORDER COMPARISONS

Counselor Perception of Actual Role

Roles	Elem.	Middle	J.H.	S.H.	J.H.-S.H.	Totals
Consultation of Inservice with Teachers	3	3	3	6	8	4
Facilitating Student Adjustment for Learning	4	4	5	7	11	6
Parent Education and Consultation	5	5	6	9	10	9
Orientation and Registration	9	7	4	4	7	5
Organizational Activities	7	9	9	5	6	8
Planned Sequential Interactions	1	1	1	2	3	1
Coordinated Standardized Testing	11	10	8	12	5	11
Educational Advisement, Scheduling and Placement	12	6	2	1	2	2
Career Guidance toward Career Development	10	12	10	3	1	3
Coordinate Student Records and Information	13	13	12	8	9	10
Coordinate of Referrals	6	8	11	10	12	12
Professional Development and Accountability	8	11	13	13	13	13
Classroom Developmental Guidance	2	2	7	11	4	7

RANK ORDER COMPARISONS

Actual Counselor Responsibilities as Perceived by their Administrators

Roles	Elem.	Middle	J.H.	S.H.	J.H.-S.H.	Totals
Consultation of Inservice with Teachers	3	3	4	9	10	9
Facilitating Student Adjustment for Learning	4	2	6	4	6	4
Parent Education and Consultation	5	5	7	6	7	7
Orientation and Registration	7.5	7	5	5	5	5
Organizational Activities	9	13	13	13	12	12
Planned Sequential Interactions	2	1	1	2	3	1
Coordinated Standardized Testing	10	8	10	7	4	8
Educational Advisement, Scheduling and Placement	12	9	3	1	1	2
Career Guidance toward Career Development	7.5	10	8	3	2	3
Coordinate Student Records and Information	13	11	12	10	9	11
Coordinate of Referrals	6	6	9	11	11	10
Professional Development and Accountability	11	12	11	12	13	13
Classroom Developmental Guidance	1	4	2	8	8	6

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RANK ORDER COMPARISONS

Counselor Perception of their Ideal Role

Roles	Elem.	Middle	J.H.	S.H.	J.H.-S.R.	Totals
Consultation of Inservice with Teachers	3	3	2	5	9	4
Facilitating Student Adjustment for Learning	4	4	4	4	8	6
Parent Education and Consultation	5	5	3	6	5	7
Orientation and Registration	9	6	7	7	7	8
Organizational Activities	8	13	13	12	13	13
Planned Sequential Interactions	1	1	1	1	2	1
Coordinated Standardized Testing	12	11	10	13	6	10
Educational Advisement, Scheduling and Placement	11	8	6	3	3	3
Career Guidance toward Career Development	10	10	8	2	1	2
Coordinate Student Records and Information	13	12	12	11	12	12
Coordinate of Referrals	6	7	9	9	10	9
Professional Development and Accountability	7	9	11	10	11	11
Classroom Developmental Guidance	2	2	5	8	4	5

RANK ORDER COMPARISONS

Counselor Responsibilities Perceived as Ideal by Grade Level for Administrators

Roles	Elem.	Middle	J.H.	S.H.	J.H.-S.H.	Totals
Consultation of Inservice with Teachers	3	3	7	10	10	8
Facilitating Student Adjustment for Learning	4	1.5	4	5	5	4
Parent Education and Consultation	5	4	6	7	7	6
Orientation and Registration	7	6	5	4	6	7
Organizational Activities	10	13	12	12	12	13
Planned Sequential Interactions	1	1.5	1	3	3	1
Coordinated Standardized Testing	8	9	8	6	4	9
Educational Advisement, Scheduling and Placement	12	8	3	1	1	2
Career Guidance toward Career Development	9	10.5	9	2	2	3
Coordinate Student Records and Information	13	10.5	11	8	8	11
Coordinate of Referrals	6	7	10	11	11	10
Professional Development and Accountability	11	12	13	13	13	12
Classroom Developmental Guidance	2	5	2	9	9	5

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University of Northern Iowa - Cedar Falls, IA 50614

Dear Counselor:

After a review of counselor job descriptions and analysis of how counselors actually spend their time, the following list of responsibilities appears to be fairly inclusive. Relative importance of each responsibility may, however, vary from level to level. Please assist us to determine the proper priority of responsibilities by ranking in order the following list based on your perceived importance of each. Place a one (1) in the blank which you would consider most important and a thirteen (13) in the blank you consider least important. Continue through Column I until completed.

Then return to Column II and rank the responsibilities in order by the amount of time you actually devote to this area of responsibility. Remember, place the number one (1) in the blank which occupies the major amount of your time and a thirteen (13) in the blank which occupies the least amount of your time. Please note the responsibilities are listed in an order determined by drawing and are not in any ranking order at present.

We are asking your administrator to complete the same instrument independently so we can determine differences in counselor/administrator perception. For this reason it is important that we have as total a response as possible.

School Number _____

Grade Level: _____ Elementary _____ Middle School _____ Junior High _____ Senior High
_____ Junior and Senior High

What percent of your time is devoted to guidance activities? _____

* * * \

	Column I	Column II
4. Continued		
Registration activities are those associated with assisting the process of obtaining and processing the necessary registration information on new and currently enrolled students.		
5. Organizational Activities Certain organizational activities are considered a part of the counselor's responsibilities, such as planning and preparation, documentation, reporting and report writing, correspondence, and paper work.	_____	_____
6. Planned Sequential Monitored Intervention Strategies for Normal Developmental Concerns of Students The provision of individual and group counseling services for students with normal developmental concerns and for those who are experiencing problems, which includes the counselor's contacts with appropriate others as well as the participating student(s). Counseling services may be initiated by the student, teacher, parent, administrator, or other concerned person.	_____	_____
7. Coordination of Standardized Testing The correct implementation of standardized testing programs and the effective utilization of test results are school-wide responsibilities, requiring coordination and supervision by administrators, counselors, and curriculum specialists. Coordination activities for standardized testing programs may include organization and distribution of test materials; assistance in planning and implementing the testings (schedule, grouping, etc.); and providing technical assistance and inservice for proper test administration, interpretation, and utilization. These activities related to school and national level testing programs.	_____	_____
8. Educational Advisement, Scheduling and Placement This area includes those activities through which counselors may assist with students' educational placements or school program choices, such as: pupil assignment to teachers or programs, educational advisement, student scheduling, and placement changes.	_____	_____
9. Career Guidance Leading to Career Development This is a special dimension of developmental guidance, and the counselor's responsibilities correlate with the teacher's responsibilities for career education. Career guidance includes all counselor's activities with or for students regarding (and appropriate to) their stages of career development. The counselor may work with students individually or in groups, may serve as a resource person to other faculty members in the development of career education activities, and may collaborate in the development of special career education programs such as a Career Fair or a Career Education Week.	_____	_____
10. Coordination of Student Records and Information The proper maintenance and utilization of student records and information in accordance with school board policy is a school-wide responsibility, requring coordination and supervision by both counselors and administrators. The counselor assists other school staff in understanding and following district procedures regarding student information and in appropriately recording student data. The transfer and receipt of student records, the review of student records for the removal of inappropriate data, interpreting information to parents and students, and monitoring information requests by others are significant activities in this area.	_____	_____
11. Coordination of Referral and Liaison with Agencies and Resource Persons External to the School The local school is not able to provide all the services and resources needed by students. In addition, other agencies working on behalf of children need a school liaison and can assist the school's efforts through collaborative and cooperative approaches. The school counselor works with many such agencies and resources for the purpose of helping families, individuals, and groups of children. This may include school system resources such as Homebound and Health Services, as well as external ones such as C.E.T.A.; Health and Rehabilitative Services; Child, Youth and Family Center; clinics and hospitals.	_____	_____
12. Professional Development and Accountability Program planning, review and accountability contribute significantly to the success of any program and are essential to the provision of a meaningful and productive program of guidance and counseling services. In addition, the on-going professional development of counselors contributes to their ability to provide up-to-date, comprehensive services. Professional development includes such activities as district inservice programs, professional meetings and reading, coursework, involvement in (and participation in) professional organizations. Finally, counselors' activities in positive public relations contribute to the acceptance, support and utilization of the program by faculty, administrators, students, parents, and the community.	_____	_____

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	Column I	Column II
13. Classroom Developmental Guidance Through affective education and developmental guidance activities, in small groups, individual classrooms and school-wide projects, counselors provide opportunities for assisting students through normal developmental tasks, most especially in the personal and social domains. The counselor may work with students directly and as a resource to and collaborator with teachers. The focus is on such issues as enhancing self-knowledge and understanding; developing skills in communication, interpersonal relationships, decision making, and problem solving; and coping with a complex and changing environment.	_____	_____

Thank you for your assistance. Please return to

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